

VOLUME 86 | APRIL 2017



THE SIGNAL



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The day that the raids came ... Darwin remembers





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The 1942 attack on Darwin - more savage than Pearl Harbor



It was the largest and most destructive single attack mounted on Australia – and led to the biggest death toll from any event in the nation's history.

On February 19 1942, Japanese fighters and bombers attacked Darwin, killing in excess of 250 people. There would be more to come: the 64th, and last, air raid on Darwin occurred on November 12 1943. In total, there were 97 air attacks on northern Australia; enemy air reconnaissance over the region continued through much of 1944.

Darwin's trauma of 1942 was remembered, and in some respects re-enacted, on February 19 this year. There was a military depiction of the dark day's events, with a four-aircraft flyover and a minute's silence to remember those who lost their lives.

This 75th anniversary commemoration recognised, too, the desperate defence measure employed. Our cover picture shows members of 103 Battery, 8/12th Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery re-creating the anti-aircraft action. Back in 1942, 188 Japanese aircraft had swarmed upon Australia's northern outpost, in a concerted action mounted from their battle group in the Timor Sea.

Eleven ships were sunk in the port of Darwin, with the largest loss of life experienced on the US destroyer *Peary*; 88 of its company were killed. Crew members of HMAS *Coonawarra* (pictured above by *Navy News*) led the tribute to those who died.

The assault was more savage than that on Pearl Harbor, in December 1941; more bombs fell on Darwin, more civilians were killed, and more ships were sunk.

Cover: *Australian gunners, accompanied by a flyover, capture the mood of February 1942* (Photo: Navy News)

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State President Faith on parade

Life for me has never been more challenging. However, the reason I come into Torrens Parade Ground every day is because the RSL remains a wonderful organisation which does outstanding work on behalf of veterans and their families.

In South Australia it has never been a financially prosperous organisation and so the problems we are facing now are not new. Former state president Arthur Blackburn VC CMG CBE ED, arguably Australia's most notable 'citizen soldier', reflected in his 1948 annual report on the loss of £2,500 – and about the same number of members.

A recent media article described it as 'Crunch time' for the RSL. Not quite. As I described it at the recent presidents' forum, we are in very difficult circumstances and we do need to take some significant action to rectify our position. But with good planning and a lot of hard work we can get back on track.

Sustainability has been one of our key strategic platforms and there remains much to do in that regard if we are to continue to successfully engage younger veterans and their families while supporting those of older generations.

ANZAC Day is looming, and that won't be compromised. Also, the ANZAC Appeal will be critical for us this year. I urge you to try that little bit harder this year to raise funds. We are tightening our belts but I also welcome any ideas that you have which can improve our business operations.

Now is not the time to be arguing. It is the time to pull together and assist. After all, helping your mates when times are tough is what the RSL was built on.

Now is one of those times.

Tim Hanna AM
Brigadier
State President



LEST WE FORGET



Please donate to the 2017 Anzac Appeal to support veterans and their families

www.rslsa.org.au PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY  SAAB



The successful RSL Art Exhibition from 2016 will make a return and has been scheduled for August to coincide with the South Australia Living Artists Festival (SALA).

The team at SALA were more than happy to include the exhibition in their program and we are excited that the work of veterans will now be open to a broader audience.

The RSL Art Exhibition will be held in the Drill Hall, Torrens Parade Ground from August 9 to August 16.

The theme for 2017 is *Binary Oppositions*, with artists invited to capture an experience while in the military or involved with the ADF community that was totally opposite from the expected outcome.

The exhibition is again open to veterans, current serving members of the ADF, RSL SA members, and their families. Registration forms and information are available from Nel at Nel.Aldrete@rslsa.org.au

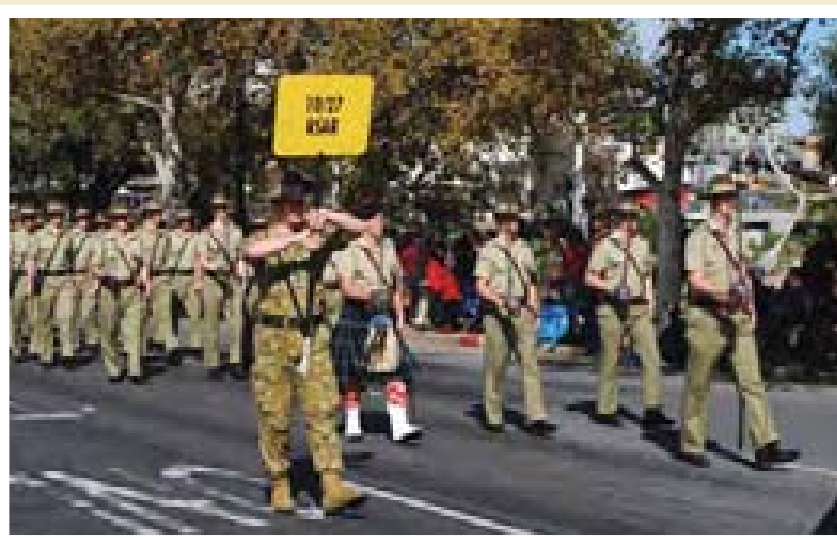
Our 2017 Australia Day honours and awards

The RSL congratulates all Australians who were recognised in the Australia Day honours

We would in particular like to recognise three recipients who have made a significant contribution to the ADF and veteran community in South Australia:

Lieutenant Colonel Graham Malcolm GOODWIN, for outstanding achievement as the Commanding Officer of the 10th/27th Battalion, the Royal South Australia Regiment. Graham was awarded a Conspicuous Service Cross and is pictured leading the 10th/27th Battalion in the ANZAC Day March. Graham has recently returned from a six-month deployment to Afghanistan, where he was part of a mentoring group training the Afghani Army.

Mr Anthony Eugene CHAPLIN, for service to veterans and their families. Tony was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (General Division) for his volunteer work over many



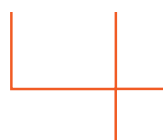
years, especially the past 11 years as Chief Marshal of the ANZAC Day Commemorative March. The award is richly deserved. Tony is a committed and loyal team player, critical to the success of ANZAC Day.

Mr Alan Leslie ORROCK, for service to the community through a range of organisations. Alan was awarded an

OAM (General Division) for his volunteer work as treasurer and committee member for the Royal South Australia Regiment Association plus work with other associations including St John Ambulance. Alan is a member of the Payneham RSL Sub-branch.

We are also aware that Riverton RSL president Roger Aitchison was presented with the Citizen of the Year award for the southern area of the Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council.

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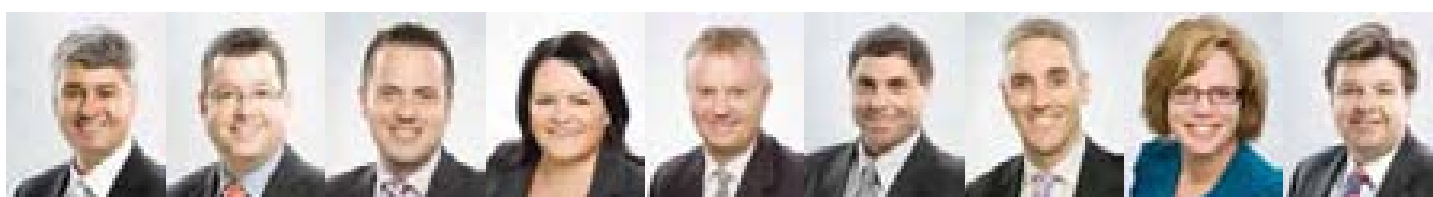
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Tails wag for second OPK9 graduation

OPERATION K9 – the RSL’s assistance dog initiative for veterans afflicted with post-traumatic stress and anxiety disorders – has celebrated its second graduating class. Five dogs, and their equally well trained new owners, received their diplomas after intensive instruction from the Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) training team.

It’s an expensive enterprise, made possible by public donations and by sponsorship from two defence technology companies: Saab Australia and Daronmont Technologies. In addition, a number of supporter groups and sub-branches have chosen Operation K9 as their major fundraising objective of the moment.

At the December graduation ceremony, a cheque for \$25,000 (the total cost of training just one dog) was presented by a 2015 graduate, Major Peter Checkley.

He and his wife, Jenny, travelling with assistance dog Ruby, raised the money through a vigorous interstate promotional campaign.

The dogs’ skills – instilled by RSB expertise – are remarkable. They can even be trained to switch on a light when a veteran is experiencing a nightmare.

Army veteran Brendan Larkin, a member of the latest graduating class, has described his newfound partnership with assistance dog Watson as “a life-changer”.

“I find that I get up earlier, I take more physical exercise, and I’m much more confident in crowded places – all thanks to Watson,” he told *The Signal*.

The ceremony also provided the opportunity to celebrate the guest of honour’s recent promotion: our first Operation K9 graduate, originally named Gunner Murray, has now risen to become Lance-Bombardier Murray.

For the past two years, he has been assigned as assistance dog and mascot for an entire military unit – 16 Air Land Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, at Woodside.

“Operation K9 is a tangible demonstration of what the RSL does in caring for returned service people,” the RSL (SA/NT) said in a media statement. “It’s our way of giving back to those who have given so much for us, and we hope to extend the program to other RSLs across Australia in due course. The feedback from clients is that the dogs have fundamentally changed their lives and the lives of their families, to the point where they can’t begin to imagine what life was like before the dogs arrived – or what it would be like without them.”

As the RSL puts it: dogs have been trained to help people who cannot see – now, some are being trained to help those who have seen too much.

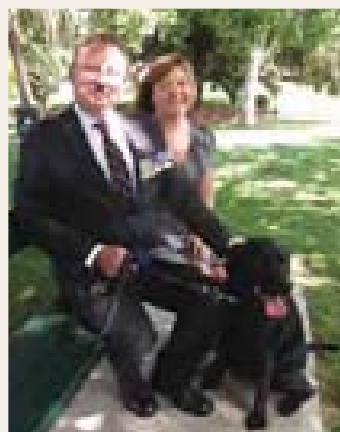


(Above): the 2016 graduating class (left to right): Dusty Goodluck and Isaac; Jace Falkenberg and Verdi; Brendan Larkin and Watson; Sam Hooper and Wallace; George Wepener and Valour

(Far right): Lance-Bombardier Murray with his senior handler, Lieutenant Colonel Berni White

(Right): Peter and Jenny Checkley with assistance dog Ruby – back now from their \$25,000 OPK9 fundraising tour

Graduation photos courtesy David Sweet Photography (davidsweet.me)





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Digging deep for AWM Flanders Fields Memorial Garden

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra unveiled its Flanders Fields Memorial Garden this month. It's a gift from the people of Flanders to commemorate the sacrifices made by Australians in the World War 1 defence of Belgium.

The garden incorporates soil from significant sites of Australian action in Belgium, names that resonate through our military history: Messines, Polygon Wood, Passchendaele, Broodseinde and Poelcappelle. The AWM decided it would also like soil from all Australian states and territories. In SA, that became a job for our team at the RSL's Virtual War Memorial.

For a start, soil was collected from the lawns of the Torrens Training Depot, in close proximity to the Vietnam War Memorial. The second site was identified as Keswick Barracks, home of the 4th Military District, which served in World War 1 as an official enlistment and discharge post, a medical clearance station, a training depot and, of equal importance, as a hospital and repatriation site for those returning from war.

The third selection was soil from Outer Harbor, where thousands of Australians embarked for active service. The exercise was then completed with the selection of Darwin.

In an effort to be fair to all those who answered the call to serve in the Great War from within South Australia, Broken Hill and Northern Territory (4th Military District), the VWM team chose those places where the greatest majority had, at some point, developed a connection.

Keswick Barracks

Soil collection site: Keswick Barracks medical precinct (at a point closest to the site of the original hospital)

Established in response to the requirement of the Universal Training Scheme (1911), the focus and purpose of Keswick Barracks expanded following the declaration of the war in August 1914. From that point it became the 4th Military District HQ. It was a centre for military recruitment and the ordnance depot.

Most units based at Morphettville or Oaklands camps marched past it on their way to and from Adelaide for ceremonial occasions. It is also significant because of its medical precinct; for many years after the Armistice, it served as the first repatriation hospital.



RSL president Brigadier Tim Hanna launches the dig, with Lieutenant Colonel Doug Langrehr of 9 Brigade

Torrens Training Depot

Soil collection site: mid-point between Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Victoria Drive entrance

Torrens Training Depot was the centre of significant military activity during World War 1. Every South Australian unit had at some time formed up for parade or had been inspected there by the state governor or other officials. This site is particularly relevant for all 4th Military District units (which includes Broken Hill) that did not embark from Adelaide but travelled by train to other states to embark with their units. This is where they gathered for a final parade and farewell before marching to Adelaide railway station.



... and, tie off, completes the Torrens Training Depot excavation

VETERANS' RADIO PROGRAMS

Service-themed or veteran-hosted shows

RSL News hosted by David Lias and Keith Harrison RPH 1197AM at 6pm on Thursdays, or online at www.rphadelaide.org.au

Listen in to Vets on Air with the VVF team on 88.7 CoastFM on Tuesday evenings 6-8pm. Includes information, music, fun, news and commemoration

In the Mid North and Iron Triangle area listen in to Haydn Madigan on 105.1 TraxFM on Mondays 6-8pm

89.7 PBA FM Fridays 9am - 1pm variety program with Bert and Margaret Newell

'Service Voices' on 101.5 FM Radio Adelaide Mondays 3-4pm

Outer Harbor

Soil collection site: 100m south of the roundabout at the intersection of Victoria Road and Lady Ruthven Drive

On October 20, 1914 the first troop transport ship, HMAT A11 *Ascanius*, departed from Outer Harbor. On this ship was the 10th Battalion and the 3rd Light Horse Regiment, both of which played such a significant role in the Gallipoli landings from April 25 1915. Outer Harbor subsequently became the focal point for almost all departures of troops and supplies, and for the return of the wounded and the sick.

Following the Armistice in November 1918, a 'welcome hut' was established, creating a more formal greeting point for soldiers on their return – with gifts and refreshments. For many of the men who departed, and for family and loved ones who had come to Outer Harbor to say goodbye and wish them well, it was to be a last point of contact.

Northern Territory

Site chosen: Port of Darwin

Over the period of the Great War, the port of Darwin was the major recruitment site for the Northern Territory with more than 283 volunteers listing it as their home address. At the time, the port was a place of employment for a significant number of men (a largely itinerant workforce). It also served as a point of embarkation for troops and supplies. Following recruitment screening, the majority of men completed their official enlistment process and embarked from the 2nd Military District and the 1st Military District, with smaller numbers being processed through the 4th and 5th Military Districts.

The soil now carries their heritage to the Flanders Memorial Garden, enshrining memories of service and – in so many instances – sacrifice too.



A trio of diggers: (left to right) Dr Andrew Cannon, chairman SA Defence Reserves Support Council; Gary Johanson, Mayor of Port Adelaide Enfield Council; RSL president Tim Hanna

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Farina flowers at ANZAC dawn

Farina, 622km north of Adelaide, is a ghost town – but enterprising travellers still gather there for dawn service each ANZAC Day. As Vietnam veteran Ken Brown has discovered, it offers an oasis on the long haul to, and from, the Simpson Desert.

Ken, a fervent RSL volunteer worker, set up camp there for the night on his latest safari. His photographic collection shows how Farina offers an intriguing touch of history as well as some creature comforts: shade, fire pits, barbecues, showers.

Originally called ‘The Gums’ or ‘Government Gums’, Farina (Latin for ‘flour’) was settled in 1878 by optimistic farmers subscribing to the theory that rain follows the plough. For a while, in the 1880s, it did. Grain crops were planted, silver and copper mines dug, and the railway line brought passing trade.

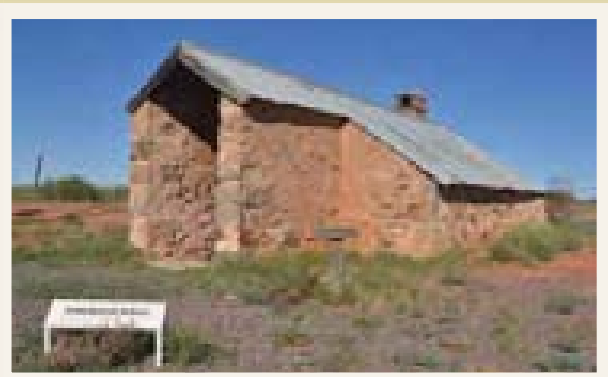
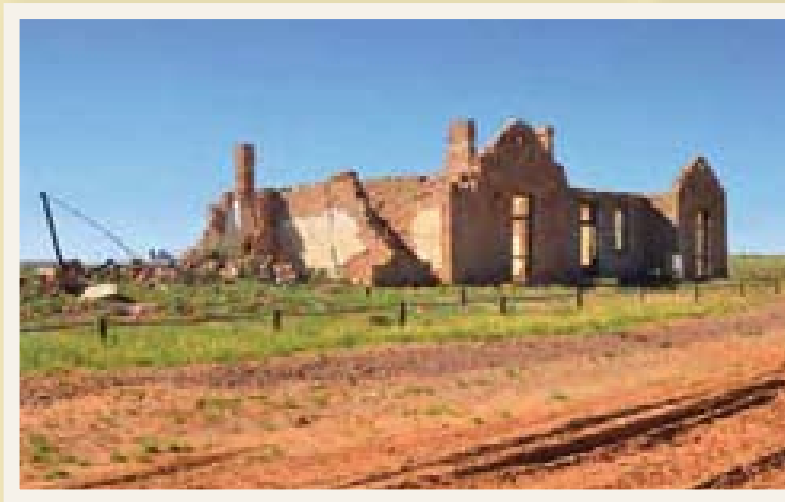
In its prime, Farina had a population of 600, two hotels (the Transcontinental and the Exchange), an underground bakery,

a bank, two breweries, a general store, an Anglican church, five blacksmiths, and a school. But the rains were never enough to sustain the farming, the rail line was eventually shifted, and the township slowly died.

Today, stone ruins – including a restored underground bakery – survive as monuments to the way things were at Farina. There are reminders too of its people’s spirit: memorials to the 33 men who served in World War 1 (five killed in action) and its 35 World War 2 veterans (three killed in action).

Come the dawn of each ANZAC Day, it remains the perfect setting for reflection and commemoration under the big sky.

– Nigel Starck



*(Clockwise from left above)
4WD traveller Ken Brown; Farina oasis on ANZAC Day;
underground bakery; memories of Farina’s call to arms;
and once 600 people lived here*

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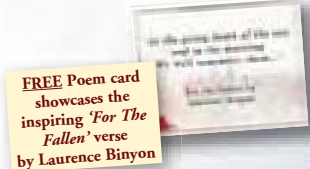
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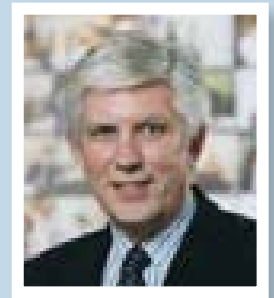
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Legal aid for military veterans

SA legal aid applications down almost 50%



The Legal Services Commission provides legal assistance for injured veterans, their families and carers.

In particular, our assistance funds lawyers to provide legal representation for injured veterans who seek to challenge a compensation ruling, or a pension decision, from the Veterans' Review Board. These legal challenges relate to war-caused disability pension entitlements and compensation claims under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act*.

"This legal assistance recognises the enormous sacrifices that military personnel make in the service of their country," says lawyer Chris Boundy, manager of access services at the Legal Services Commission of SA (*pictured*).

"It ensures eligible veterans have access to proper representation if they challenge a decision regarding compensation or pension payments.

"We provide free, independent advice about rights and entitlements under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act* and the *Military Rehabilitation Compensation Act*. We can also advise on the merits of lodging claims and appeals, and the chances of success in these matters.

Declining applications

"In recent years, however, we have received relatively few applications from SA veterans for assistance in these matters. In the past six years, there has been almost a 50% drop in legal aid applications from SA veterans wanting to appeal against a decision of the Veterans' Review Board."

There were 19 legal aid applications in 2010/11 (15 were approved) and 10 applications in 2015/16 (seven were approved).

Means test waived

"It's important to note that, while grants of legal aid are usually means-tested, grants to war veterans in these matters are not means tested," Mr Boundy says.

"However, there is a merits test which requires there to be a reasonable prospect of success in the matter for a grant of legal aid to be provided."

Claims can relate to physical injuries and psychological conditions such as major depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. (See below for further information regarding PTSD.)

For further information, telephone the Legal Services Commission on 1300 366 424 or go www.lsc.sa.gov.au

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

(This information comes from the ADF Health Portal)

What do we know about PTSD in the ADF? All Australians, including ADF members, have the potential to be exposed to traumas that may contribute to the development of PTSD. However the rates of both military and non-military related traumas are higher in the ADF than in the Australian community. From the findings of the 2010 ADF Mental Health Prevalence and Wellbeing Study, it has been estimated that 90% of ADF members have experienced at least one potentially traumatic event at some time in their life, compared to 73% of an age and employment matched sample of the Australian community.

It is estimated that approximately 8.3% of ADF members will have experienced PTSD in the past 12 months, which is significantly higher than in the

Australian community (5.2%). In particular, ADF males report a greater rate of PTSD compared with the general community (8.1% versus 4.6%). PTSD is a condition that can develop in response to single or repeated exposure to traumatic events.

A number of events have the potential to cause PTSD, including: threat of death; serious injury; viewing or handling human remains; seeing someone badly injured or killed; interpersonal violence such as being mugged or sexually assaulted; being unable to respond to a threatening situation; and witnessing human suffering on a large scale.

Symptoms of PTSD include:

- repeated intrusive, distressing memories or dreams

- poor sleep patterns
- avoidance of reminders associated with the trauma
- negative mood and thoughts following the event
- agitation and negative changes in behavior.

Symptoms may develop immediately following exposure, though it is also common for people to have a gradual increase in the range and intensity of symptoms. The onset of PTSD can sometimes be sudden and dramatic – presenting as a 'breakdown' occurring sometime after exposure. It is important to remember that while not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will develop PTSD, other mental health conditions may develop, including depression.

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At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.*



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‘Silver City’ remembers its gallant trio

At Broken Hill – NSW outpost of the RSL SA family – memories are revived, each ANZAC Day, of three local identities renowned for their conduct in war: Roy Inwood VC, Matron Irene Drummond, and Sister Vivian Bullwinkel.

‘Stoned by mongrels’ on his way to war.

They speak his name with pride in Broken Hill today – but on his return home in 1918, Sergeant Roy Inwood VC (*pictured right*) outraged his own townsfolk with inflammatory comments. After employment in the mines, he had enlisted in the 10th Infantry Battalion, survived Gallipoli, and was awarded the Victoria Cross for his ‘conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty’ at the Battle of Menin Road, Belgium, 1917. His citation said, in part:

He moved forward through our barrage alone to an enemy strong-post and captured it, together with nine prisoners, killing several of the enemy. ... In the early morning of 21 September ... [he] located a machine gun which was causing several casualties. He went out alone and bombed the gun and team, killing all but one, whom he brought in as a prisoner with the gun.

But, despite receiving a hero’s reception back in the ‘Silver City’, he abused the welcoming crowd. Sgt Inwood maintained that, on enlistment four years earlier, he “been stoned by mongrels at the train”. Now, he added: “Those mongrels were the first to shake me by the hand ... [and] I would like to be at one end of the street with a machine-gun and have them at the other end.”

Finding himself *persona non grata* in Broken Hill, Roy Inwood VC subsequently experienced a chequered peace: working as a miner in Tasmania; divorced; widowed; married for a third time; and then becoming an Adelaide council labourer.

He died in 1971, aged 81. Today, the RSL premises in Argent Street are named ‘Roy Inwood VC House’. There are hopes, too, for installation of an Inwood statue on the footpath – as further evidence that old squabbles are long forgotten.



According to the UK *Daily Telegraph*, when the February 1942 atrocity came to light after the war it “stirred Australians to a new pitch of anti-Japanese sentiment”.

The nurses had sought refuge on the island following the sinking of their ship, the SS *Vyner Brooke*, in sustained aerial bombardment on its attempt to escape from Singapore.

Bangka Island massacre

“Chin up, girls!” said Matron Irene Drummond (*pictured above*) as she and the 21 nurses under her command were ordered by their captors to walk into the sea at Bangka Island, in what is now Indonesia. After the Japanese machine-gun had done its job, there was only one survivor.

The massacre is recorded on memorials on display in Broken Hill – for both Matron Drummond and the sole survivor, Sister Vivian Bullwinkel, had joined the Australian Army from the hospital there. Sister Bullwinkel, born in Kapunda, had also gone to school in Broken Hill, where her father worked in the mines.

Vivian Bullwinkel floated with the tide after being hit in the left hip when the machine-gun opened fire. Eventually sensing it appeared safe to go ashore, she found her way to a prison camp – which would be her home for the next three-and-a-half years.

She died, aged 84, in July 2000. Over the years, she maintained a strong connection with Broken Hill – notably, as the RSL museum’s photograph album shows us (*see below*), by leading an ANZAC Day march along Argent Street. The photo also discloses how the march in years past took a different route from that followed today; hence the ‘eyes left’.



Vivian Bullwinkel marching on ANZAC Day in Broken Hill, c 1960

Photos courtesy RSL museum, Broken Hill and Broken Hill Base Hospital

RSL Care SA – Andrew Russell Veteran Living

In 2009 the Department of Veterans' Affairs released a report stating that on any given night up to 3,000 veterans of the Australian Defence Force could be experiencing homelessness.

In response, RSL LifeCare NSW launched their veteran homelessness program in March 2014, calling it Homes for Heroes. This program has been successful in NSW in assisting veterans and ex-service personnel address their personal issues that have contributed to their situation of homelessness.

In November 2015, a pilot Homes for Heroes program was launched here in South Australia as a joint venture between RSL Care SA, RSL LifeCare NSW and RSL SA (State Branch) to answer one simple question – is a veteran homelessness program needed here in South Australia? With 49 veterans and ex-service personnel accessing the South Australian Homes for Heroes services between November 15 2015 and March 1 2017, it was determined that there was in fact a need for such a service here in South Australia. The assistance of RSL LifeCare NSW and RSL SA was instrumental during the successful pilot phase of the veteran homelessness program. Now that the pilot phase has been completed RSL Care SA have taken up the reigns to drive the program forward into the future.

The first major change that has occurred since RSL Care SA took up sole responsibility for the delivery of a veteran homelessness service in South Australia was a name change. The name 'Homes for Heroes' has been replaced with 'Andrew Russell Veteran Living (ARVL)'. This name change aims to pay homage to the first Australian, as well as South Australian, soldier who gave his life in the service of his country while on operations in Afghanistan.

Sergeant Andrew Russell enlisted in the Australian Regular Army on November 26 1986. Sgt Russell was killed in action on February 16 2002 when the long-range patrol vehicle within which he was travelling struck a suspected anti-vehicle mine. Sergeant Russell is survived by his wife Kylie and daughter Leisa.

ANDREW RUSSELL

VETERAN LIVING

The ARVL program aims, primarily, to provide safe and secure emergency and transitional accommodation, as well as three square meals a day, to veterans and ex-service personnel who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, homelessness. This 'first step, housing' approach aims to provide a solid foundation from which residents can focus solely on addressing their own individual circumstances of homelessness.

The ARVL program looks externally to develop support networks to assist its residents. The ARVL program does not profess to provide all the services necessary to address an individual's circumstance of homelessness and instead looks to engage specialist service providers such as government agencies, other ex-service organisations and community organisations, as well as others to assist its residents. Through engagement with the ARVL program and other external service providers the aim is to help residents address issues such as long term unemployment, difficult financial standing, drug and alcohol dependence, social isolation, health concerns (including mental health) and barriers to accessing traditional housing options.

A key partner in the ARVL program is the Australian Lutheran College, from whom RSL Care SA rents the accommodation services that make RSL Care SA's veteran homelessness program unique. The partnership of funding from RSL Care SA and the provision of accommodation, meals and cleaning services by the Australian Lutheran College allows the ARVL program to provide veterans with an immediate solution to address their most basic of needs – a roof over the head and food on the table.

RSL Care SA's addition of the Andrew Russell Veteran Living program to its suite of established veteran accommodation solutions, which already include aged care living, retirement living and affordable housing, highlights our commitment to addressing the needs of the veteran community here in South Australia.

To ensure the ARVL program's sustainability, RSL Care SA will continue to develop our partnerships within the community to ensure relevant services are provided to our most vulnerable veterans, both now and into the future.

– Text contributed by RSL Care SA

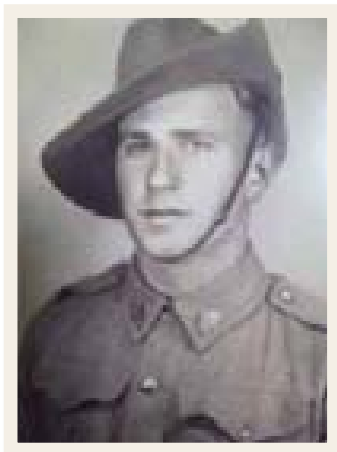


Parents of Sergeant Andrew Russell, Bob and Jan Russell, officially open the ARVL program at the War Veterans Home 100th anniversary on March 24 2017 with Loretta Byers (right), chair of RSL Care SA board

OBITUARY

RONALD HERBERT GRAETZ

4 January 1919 – 17 February 2017



The wartime service of Ronald ('Ron') Graetz, who has died aged 98, was changed dramatically on February 1 1942 by the intervention of a British military policeman.

Ron was a despatch rider with the 2/3rd Australian Machine Gun Battalion in the Syrian campaign. At its conclusion, and with the battalion shipping out, Ron rode his 3.5 side-valve Norton down to the wharf at Port Tewfik, on the Suez Canal, ready to board the *Orcades*.

He dumped the bike and raced up the gangway. "Oi!" shouted the MP. "Who owns this bike?" Naturally, his good mates in the 2/3rd pointed to Ron.

The MP ordered him back on shore, made him stay with the Norton – which, along with Ron himself, was loaded onto the freighter *Industria*. It sailed all the way to Fremantle, and then to Adelaide. The helpful 'dobbers' on the *Orcades* had, in the meantime, been diverted to the disastrous Java conflict.

Those who survived it became prisoners of war; for many, that would mean slave labour on the Burma Railway.

Before the war, Ron Graetz had ridden a horse-drawn cart rather than a motorbike. He began work at 14 ("one of the few people who did have a job", as he remembered it) delivering bread for the Klingbiel Bakery, Murray Bridge. The horse was so accustomed to its daily

round that Ron could leap off the cart at one customer's home, deposit the bread, walk to the back of the property, climb over the fence, and find the horse waiting for him at the next address.

A man of impressive physique, he came from a family with a rowing tradition. His father, Herbert Ephraim Graetz, had been a member of the Murray Bridge national champion eight representing Australia at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris. Ron himself was selected to represent South Australia at the 1940 King's Cup, only to find the event abandoned because of hostilities. He picked up a .303 instead of his blade, and went off in search of war and, perhaps, adventure.

The prevailing mood at the recruiting depot was a casual one, with wisecracks flying about. "Come over here, you blokes," called a 2/3rd battalion spruiker. "We'll be mechanised. The other blokes'll be walking." That, thought Ron, made sense; so he joined the machine gunners.

It was immediately apparent, though, that his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Blackburn VC, believed in physical fitness. The battalion marched from Torrens Parade Ground into the city of Adelaide in early January 1941. From there, they marched to the Warradale depot, 12km distant, and then to Woodside – a further 43km away in the Adelaide Hills. That was just the start of Colonel Blackburn's toughening-up campaign.

The next part was even harder: a 175km bivouac to the coastal town of Victor Harbor and back. There were moments of respite, however: cricket matches against teams from country towns en route, beer from roadside pubs, and a dance at the Victor Harbor Mechanics Institute. As John Bellair writes, in his official unit history: 'All ranks had received much kindness and generous hospitality from the people of South Australia, a fact indicated by a sudden increase in the incidence of matrimony.'



Ron Graetz, the tall, handsome baker's roundsman from Murray Bridge, remained unattached in that regard – although, as he recalled in a magazine interview 74 years later: “I didn't get many knock-backs.” Travel, in the meantime, was seduction enough: to Colombo, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria. Ron seized this opportunity to record exotic views for posterity, buying himself a camera (of the ‘Coronet’ brand) in Jerusalem. His album, ever after, would display images of the Cedars of Lebanon, of orange groves and date palms, of suntanned men grinning under their slouch hats in the desert, of the Temple of Jupiter in Baalbeck, and even of a Vichy French tank knocked out by Allied action.

On returning to Australia in 1942, he found that only 200 members of the original 2/3rd – those, like him, who had avoided the ill-fated *Orcades* voyage to Java – were left. As a veteran of fighting the Vichy French in Syria, Ron was immediately earmarked for promotion and soon became a platoon sergeant.

The re-formed battalion, bolstered by reinforcements, was posted to New Guinea. At the time of the Japanese surrender in 1945, he was an acting platoon commander. It had been a gruelling, and often sinister, conflict. In what was his most haunting memory of those times, he recalled seeing evidence of Japanese cannibalism – of their own kind and, in one singularly distressing incident, of a slain Australian soldier.

The tranquillity of the river helped him adjust to post-war life. Ron went back to rowing, and stroked the South Australian crew at the 1947 King's Cup in Perth. Because of bad weather, the course was shortened. Victoria, equipped with the boat best suited to rough water, won; South Australia, the pre-race favourite, had to use a practice boat and was roundly defeated.



He became a barman at the Bridgeport Hotel, where he met – and then married – the hotel's receptionist, Tressa Bowman. After a succession of business initiatives, they secured the licence of the Rising Sun pub at Lobethal.

When Lobethal (‘The Tigers’) won the 1966 Torrens Valley association premiership, defeating Birdwood 14.8 to 13.10. Ron gave them two kegs, soon recuperating the expense through increased bar sales.

Tressa and Ron had two daughters, and – in search of a more family-oriented life – opened a wine shop at Murray Bridge. In retirement, he relished reunions with old comrades, reflecting in a 2014 interview: “The battalion was a top unit, and I met some great blokes. I wouldn't have missed my army service for anything.”

Facing page. January 1941: Ron Graetz (circled) and 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion comrades begin their parade through Adelaide on the long road to war

*Above. Boat and bike: Ron Graetz as stroke of the 1947 South Australian King's Cup crew (with his state pocket top right of frame), and as a despatch rider on his Norton shortly before the *Orcades* incident*

RSL ROUND-UP... *Reunions...*

Adelaide RSL Sub-Branch ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The RSL Adelaide Sub-Branch AGM will be held on Friday 28 April 2017 at 5:00pm in the Boardroom, ANZAC House, Torrens Training Depot.

If you would like a copy of the minutes from the 2016 AGM please contact me on julie@rslsa.org.au and I will email a copy to you.

All Sub-Branch positions will be declared vacant at the AGM. Should you wish to nominate for a position, nomination forms are available from me via email. The closing date for nominations is Friday 21 April 2017.

Only financial Service Members are allowed to nominate for the positions of President and Vice President, and, should a vote be necessary, only financial Service Members are allowed to vote.

An agenda will be available on the day of the AGM. If you have any items you may wish to raise during the AGM, please email me the details by no later than Friday 14 April 2017. This includes any motions you wish to be put to the Conference. If the matter requires the distribution of relevant information prior to the AGM please keep this in mind so that adequate consideration can be given to the item.

As we are nearing the Annual Sub-Branch Conference, a General Sub-Branch Meeting will be held on Friday 16 June 2017 at 2:00pm to discuss our voting position on the motions being put forward. We do not envisage any further Sub-Branch meetings for the remainder of 2017.

Julie Chapman
Secretary, Adelaide Sub-Branch

Sergeant Ashley Meek

A police sergeant who had served as a soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan posted angry messages on Facebook before taking his own life.

Confirming the incident, which occurred at Cowell on Eyre Peninsula on March 5, police identified him as Brevet Sergeant Ashley Meek. He was 31.

Channel 7 News told viewers: "Over the police radio, the well-respected sergeant apologised to his family before taking a swipe (on Facebook) at the army and police."

The RSL-SA president, Brigadier Tim Hanna, subsequently issued this appeal to ADF members, their families and friends: "If you are concerned about your own wellbeing or that of a loved one, seek support and information from VVCS (Veterans and Veterans' Families Counselling Service)."

VVCS national call centre: 1800 011 046 (24 hour service)

1ST AUSTRALIAN FIELD HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION INC. 2018 REUNION

The 1AFH Association is to hold the 2018 reunion in Melbourne on Friday, May 11th to Tuesday, May 15th.

On behalf of the President and committee, all members and past members of the Association or unit are welcome to attend.

This reunion will be the 50th anniversary of the unit's establishment, in Vung Tau, SVN on April 1st, 1968.

Contact the Secretary, Jeff Gilbert, on 03 5772 1828, 0409 240 238 or email je.gilbert@internode.on.net for details and information.

www.callsignvampire.org.au

HMAS DUCHESS REUNION 2017

Urgent Notice, Venue and Dates Corrections

Registrations are now called for the 8th reunion of HMAS *Duchess* crew members, to be held at Surfers Paradise RSL, not Tweed Heads as previously advised, and for October 6th - 8th, 2017, not November.

Full cost will be \$200.00 which includes Friday and Saturday night dinner and Sunday lunch, and a certain amount of dry till Saturday night. Deposit of \$50.00/head for prospective attendees to be paid 1st July, 2017, balance of payment by 8th September 2017.

Phone or email for flyer to Rod Clarey, Phone 0409267388, or email rod.clarey1@bigpond.com or Bruce Bowmaker Phone 0403243795, or email littlefish.in@bigpond.com

Announcements... Events

'DON'T FORGET ME COBBER' LUNCHEON - PORT LINCOLN



The next 'Don't Forget Me Cobber' luncheon will be held at the **Port Lincoln Hotel on Friday May 19.**

Don't miss this great opportunity to hear an unforgettable speaker, Robert 'Dogs' Kearney, over a delicious lunch and drinks, for \$75/person.

Bookings:

<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/research/home-page-archives/port-lincoln-luncheon>

Image: *The Bugler, Port Lincoln*, courtesy James Fitzroy Photography
www.jamesfitzroyphotography.com.au



RENMARK HOTEL



**Offering RSL Members
15% discount on food, drinks
and accommodation**

The Renmark Hotel sits majestically on a long sweeping bend of the Murray River. Providing quality accommodation, fabulous dining and great entertainment in a refined, relaxed and modern setting.

**Open 7 Days
Breakfast, lunch and dinner
Coffee and cake all day
Murray Avenue, Renmark
Telephone: 08 8586 6755
www.renmarkhotel.com.au**

Take a bite - it's Bute-i-ful

It's called *Bute-i-ful Bites* – and it celebrates the favourite recipes and the history of Bute, 140km north of Adelaide. The publication of this new cookbook was inspired by former Bute RSL women's auxiliary president Sandy Mankoch, compiled by Caroline Scrimshaw (with major contributions by Maxine Rose), and edited by Leonie Kerley.

Its historical segments focus on the auxiliary's own long chapter of service, along with reminiscences of the township's debutante balls. *Bute-i-ful Bites* is now on sale at Bute Foodworks for \$10.

Pictured at the book's launch are (left to right) district council mayor Cynthia Axford (who performed the ceremony), Sandy Mankoch, Caroline Scrimshaw, Maxine Rose, Leonie Kerley, and Anita Wilkinson (women's auxiliary president).



ANZAC bathing born under Turkish guns – and the legacy lives on at Gilberton

Swimming in the sea was popular with the men at ANZAC Cove, particularly as their daily water allowance left little for washing either themselves or their clothes. As the weather turned hot, the beach sometimes looked like a holiday resort. The Turks began lobbing shells into the sea amongst the bathers, but the men continued to swim there.

– Patrick Carlyon, *The Gallipoli Story* (Penguin 2003)

There is a strong connection between swimming and military service back home in South Australia too – notably at the Gilberton pool. A club was launched there in the year of Gallipoli, 1915. Then, in 1920, a site between Severn Street and Gilbert Street, Gilberton was dedicated as a soldiers’ memorial swimming reserve.

The River Torrens pool even hosted the Australian championships in 1923 and 1926. With terracing on the banks, diving boards, and changing sheds, the club remained an active aquatic location until 1970.

All those memories and achievements – and the sacrifices – have been acknowledged with the installation of a new memorial on the site. It was unveiled, in late February, by Brigadier Tim Hanna (RSL-SA president).

It honours the 54 men of Gilberton, Medindie, and Walkerville who died on active service in World War I.

The \$10,000 cost of the memorial was met by an ANZAC Day Commemoration Council grant. Walkerville RSL club provided vigorous support, notably through attendance in force and a barbecue lunch.



Among those named on the memorial is Private Russell Bosisto, 23, of Medindie, (pictured left)

who was killed at Pozieres in 1916. His remains were not discovered until 1998, when a farmer’s plough disturbed the soil.

Then followed a military funeral, with a guard of honour from SA’s 10/27th Battalion, and burial at Courcellette Cemetery in Picardie.



(Clockwise from above): 1920s swimming carnival; crowds at the Gilby 1959; plaque commemorating the 1920 dedication; new memorial adorned with wreaths in February



RSL BOOKSHELF



A Tail of Two Diggers

During the four years of fighting in World War 1, Australia lost 60,000 men killed in operations. In the 10 years following World

War 1 it is estimated that another 60,000 returned veterans died as a result of their wounds, “cleaning their weapons”, “misadventure”, alcoholism or other high risk behaviours. In 2016 alone Australia has lost more veterans at home than soldiers lost in the 13 years of conflict of Afghanistan’s Operation Slipper.

This book is for all those who left the conflict, but who remain conflicted.

A Tail of Two Diggers is inspired by stories of ‘Digger’, a bulldog from Broadmeadows, Victoria, who became mascot of the 1st Division, A.I.F. Digger served with his mates at Gallipoli and the Western Front. He was gassed at Pozieres, wounded at Ypres and befriended by Sgt James Martin of Hindmarsh SA. The two became inseparable, sharing their experiences of war. Both were repatriated to England prior to their return to Australia in June 1918.

In Australia their service continued, where, lauded as heroes, they led recruiting and fund raising marches. However, as well as their external wounds both carried invisible wounds from their service. While they were recovering in the Randwick Rehabilitation Hospital, celebratory fireworks caused Digger to think he was under fire again. He attempted to jump the fence but failed and fell back with a burst blood vessel causing his death.

His memory was never forgotten by either James Martin, who recovered and returned to Hindmarsh to marry and begin a new life, or their carer, Mrs J. Little. Martin left Digger’s mementoes with her when he left Randwick Hospital. Mrs Little’s family donated the artefacts to the Australian War Memorial after her death.

Sensitively and evocatively written by John Gillam and Yvonne Fletcher, lavishly illustrated by artist Paul Durell, this children’s book, through the service and sacrifice of Digger and Sgt Martin, leads the reader to understand the indicators and impact of PTSD. The water colour drawings engage younger readers to convey the storyline to them. The narrative text is intended to engage the empathy of an older reader through their experiences of grieving. This book has permission to use the Centenary of ANZAC logo.

In this book the authors have sought to:

- Provide a tribute to Digger, Sgt Martin and those who suffer from PTSD
- Provide PTSD-affected families a third person account to highlight the symptoms and start a conversation about the impact of “invisible wounds”
- Raise funds to support Operation K9 and RSL DefenceCare
- Align the content with the Australian curriculum.

Supported by teacher notes and activities, the book is an invaluable educational tool covering the Australian curriculum areas of English, history and health. The primary markets for the book are children aged eight and over, through to adults, those with an interest in animals at war and PTSD/depression organisations. In this way a story from a dark past will create a brighter future for PTSD sufferers.

Authors - John Gillam and Yvonne Fletcher

Illustrator - Paul Durell

RSL online shop (rslshop.org.au)

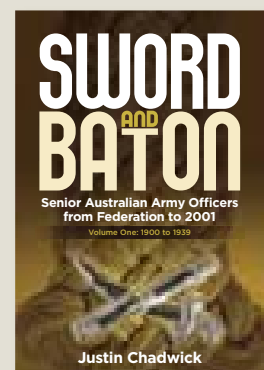
Price: \$19.95

Sword and Baton

Sword and Baton is a collection of 86 biographies representing every Australian Army officer to reach the rank of major general from Federation to the outbreak of World War 2. This is the first of three volumes, and its scope is broad, including chaplains-general, surgeons-general and British Army officers who served with the AIF or the permanent forces. Author Justin Chadwick’s portrayal of these officers’ careers provides a lens through which he examines trends such as the development of military skills which ensured that, by the commencement of hostilities in 1914, Australia boasted a pool of well-trained,

albeit inexperienced, officers. The effects of command under pressure of war and the enormous physical impact of combat are likewise portrayed in these comprehensive biographies. By the end of hostilities Australian officers had garnered immense experience and were among the best in the Allied forces. This hard-won skill base was to be all but lost in the interwar period. *Sword and Baton* offers its readers more than a series of biographies.

Rather, it describes a crucial period in Australian military history through the lives of the extraordinary men at its head.



Dymocks - Rundle Mall and from Book Depository (post free).
Author - Justin Chadwick
Hardback \$34.99

Note: These books are listed for the interest of *Signal* readers - but they are not available through the RSL (SA/NT). Summaries of their themes were obtained from the publishers.

RSL FAMILY... Sub-Branches,

Melville Dawes steps down as Ceduna RSL president

After two decades in charge of the Ceduna branch of the RSL, Melville Dawes says it is time to take a step back.

The 91-year-old said he was still going to be part of the RSL but after a long stint as president he decided it was time to hand the reins over.

“I have been doing this for more than 18 years and have done my bit,” he said. “I’m 91, so I deserve a rest.”

The now former president was last year declared the Citizen of the Year at the Australia Day awards ceremony, highlighting his service to the RSL and local community for a number of years.

During his years as RSL president he was instrumental in the installation of several memorials and additions including the memorial for the Hudson Lockheed bomber crash at the Ceduna airport and the new Soldiers Memorial Park gates.

Outside of Ceduna Mr Dawes also campaigned for the US Government to recognise Australian servicemen like himself who served in the US Merchant Marine Navy in World War 2.

After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in late 1941 and quickly seized as many islands in the Pacific as they could, the creation of the Small Ships Section became vital to the war effort.

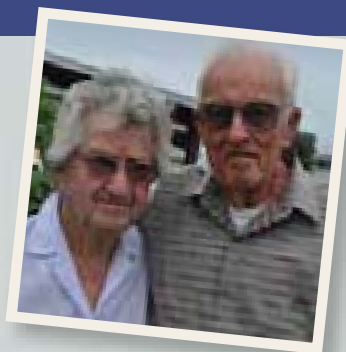
The Small Ships Section started in 1942 by conducting amphibious landings and supporting resupply and operational manoeuvres during the New Guinea campaign. He said he looked back with happiness at his time as Ceduna branch president and recognised his fellow RSL members for helping accomplish his goals in the community.

“I’ve enjoyed it, I met a lot of people while doing it,” Mr Dawes said. “It has been a good time, I made some good friends and we had memorials built.

“I did my bit there and along with my crew we were able to raise money to do these things.

“I got on well with the council and community.”

Mr Dawes was only 16 when he left for the South Pacific to serve in the war and thinks he is the only remaining serviceman from the World War 2 in the district.



STEPPING DOWN: Melville Dawes, with wife Mary, says it is time to step aside but he will remain part of the RSL organisation. Picture: Luca Cetta

“The RSL offered mateship for the people that served,” he said.

“Most of the public have outgrown the war and the servicemen are getting old.”

Mr Dawes said stepping down as president would give him time to do other things: “I will get to do what I didn’t do beforehand.”

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Remembered at Port Augusta – and on ancient film



Frederick Holmes (pictured) was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery during the battle of Le Cateau on 26 August 1914. Today his gallantry

is acknowledged on two memorials set far apart – one in the London suburb of Bermondsey, the other in Port Augusta (pictured right).

On August 26, as a lance-corporal serving in the King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, he had dodged a German bombardment to rescue a wounded man.

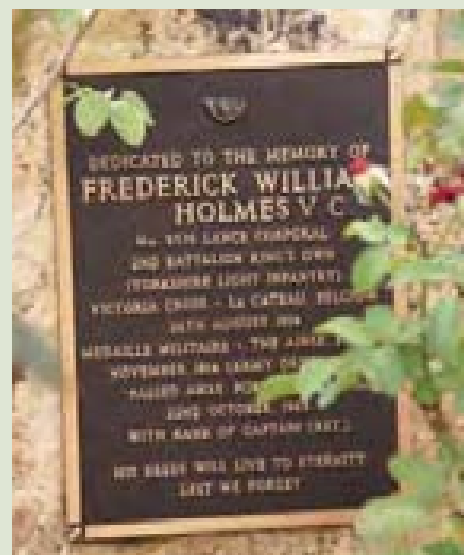
After carrying his comrade back to the trenches, he threw himself into the maelstrom again to prevent a British gun from falling to enemy hands.

In January 1915, after being invested with the Victoria Cross by King George V, he was given a hero’s welcome in the streets of Bermondsey, the London suburb where he had been born. He then went back to active service, fought on, and was eventually promoted captain. But the immediate post-war years were demoralising. He and his wife had six children, employment was hard to secure, and at one stage Frederick Holmes VC even considered going into the Bermondsey workhouse. Instead, he sold his VC and, with the proceeds, began a new life in Australia. He died at Port Augusta in 1969.

Bermondsey unveiled a commemorative stone in August 2014 – precisely a century after his valour under fire. In addition, there is a surviving 17-second Pathé News

film clip of Frederick Holmes, shot possibly on the day of his investiture.

It can be found at:
<http://www.britishpathe.com/video/corporal-holmes-vc-1/query/Frederick>



Supporters, *and* Associations

RSL active up and running



Staff from the 16 Air Land Regiment at Woodside have taken responsibility for the first RSL Active Running Group, launched in January.

Lieutenant Colonel Berni White (former CO of 16 ALR) plus Warrant Officers Jason Jarrett and Adam Law were joined by RSL SA president Tim Hanna on the fringe of the River Torrens.

The first run was a casual five kilometres: we will not be revealing the times here.

The group will meet again on Saturday mornings and will advertise future runs on Facebook.

You can join the runners at the Torrens Parade Ground at 0730h or meet in front of the Par 3 kiosk by the weir before the run starts at 0800h. It will be another 5km run/jog/walk time trial and it's absolutely free.

This is a great chance to set some goals as there are also a number of longer running events approaching later in the year.

Slim, trim Michelle – NT weight-loss star

RAAF veteran Michelle Murphy has found a new lease of life – by losing 45kg.

She attributes her stunning change in weight to gastric surgery, followed by the 12-month Heart Health program funded through DVA and run nationally by Corporate Health Management. The program is aimed at current and former ADF members who are veterans of operational or peacekeeping missions.

Michelle, who served in the RAAF for 23 years and now lives in Darwin, became concerned when her weight hit 100kg. "I'd been worrying about trying to get fit through exercise because I had a shoulder injury and didn't want to re-injure myself," she recalls. The Heart Health team soon put those fears to rest through a structured schedule of stress management, back care, rest, and nutrition – all custom-designed for her needs.

"I was taught the correct way to exercise," she says.

As a result, Michelle weighs in today at just 55kg. Her advice to anyone eligible for, but hesitating over, the DVA Heart Health scheme: "Just jump in and do it."

– Nigel Starck



Before and after Heart Health: Michelle (centre) with family members, and pictured today 45kg lighter

(Photos courtesy of Nardi Ling, DVA Community Support Adviser)



To find out more about the Heart Health Program:
www.veteranshearthealth.com.au
 or call Corporate Health Management on **1300 246 262**

JOHN KINSELA

- soldier, wrestler and Aboriginal elder

RSL SA in partnership with Veterans SA and Reconciliation SA will host a commemorative service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans on Friday June 2nd during Reconciliation Week. The annual service is held at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander War Memorial at Torrens Parade Ground. Every year a guest speaker is invited to address the audience – and this year we welcome John Kinsela.



Not many people can lay claim to serving their country at war and at two Olympics, but John Kinsela represented Australia at Mexico and Munich and saw active service in Vietnam 1970/71.

Mr Kinsela is a national wrestling champion and was placed seventh in the world at the 1972 Summer Olympic Games.

He is also the nephew of Reg Saunders, the first Aboriginal Australian to be commissioned as an officer in the Australian Army.

His father was a Wiradjuri man from Condobolin and his mother a member of the stolen generation who grew up in Adelaide but whose family are from the Northern Territory.

Less than 24 hours into his tour of Vietnam he was confronted with the realities of war as he drove past a mass grave of Viet Cong.

He's now retired and supports the community's sentencing program and hopes to continue being a role model for other young aboriginal athletes.

In the Mount Druitt Police Citizens Youth Club, the beating heart of Sydney's working class western suburbs, Wally Koenig, a 58-year-old former detective and Olympian, watches over a group of young wrestlers. Wrestling is a different world and Koenig speaks the language fluently – snap downs, bridges, duck-unders, cradles. Whistle at the ready, his mind is on the upcoming national championships. "I want nothing but gold medals in Adelaide," he shouts. "We can do it but we've gotta be serious."

The Mount Druitt PCYC wrestling room is a spartan affair with a spongy mat, benches for parents and large posters, one marking Koenig's 1988 Seoul Olympics experience, a portal to glory in a faraway land.

The others – Mexico, Munich, Istanbul – chart the extraordinary journey of the club's founding father, the first Aboriginal to wrestle in the Olympics and the man known in these parts as Uncle John.

Uncle John Kinsela, the oldest of 10 children born to a Wiradjuri father and a Jawoyn mother, enters the wrestling room with a big smile, pushing the wheelchair of an old friend. Parents instantly surround him. One mother thanks him for posting tournament videos on Facebook. It's early evening and he's full of energy despite being up at 5.30am to work with Koori kids in the Breaking Barriers program. "Boys and girls wrestling together, all cultures mixing," he says as he surveys the room. "It's fantastic."

Koenig takes a break from the training mat to share the history of the club, noting Kinsela's role as founder and earlier as his mentor. "In my teens John looked like a big man, my first wrestling hero," he explains. "When I was coming through we were the same weight for a few years and he spent a lot of time sharing the skills and techniques he'd learned overseas. If you look at him now he's such a gregarious, fun-loving guy – it's hard to believe he was a gladiator for a big part of his life."

When Kinsela got too old to run the wrestling classes, Koenig was glad to step in and maintain the tradition. The succession plan worked and the club is thriving: "We've never enjoyed this level of talent, including six Australian champions," says Koenig.

He was born in Sydney's Surry Hills in 1949. Kinsela's childhood was a story of movement between Aboriginal communities. His sister Lorraine describes it as moving in a "bubble of Aboriginal cousins". The family finally landed in Redfern and at 14 Kinsela was forced to leave school and provide for his family, working in a sock factory and on a paper run.

Kinsela didn't plan to be a wrestler. Like most Kooris he had boxing in the

blood and one day his boxing trainer didn't turn up and the wrestling trainer invited him to the mat. He excelled and made the final of the NSW state titles three months later. "It's survival of the fittest and so strategic," recalls Kinsela "You have to outthink and outmanoeuvre."

His meteoric rise saw him win the Australian championships and selection for the 1968 Olympics in the 52kg division whilst still only 18. "I couldn't believe it," he says. "It was my first time overseas and we were given 10 weeks in Mexico to acclimatise."

The Mexico Games were a blur for Kinsela but he remembers thousands of fans at the Olympic Village entrance and for the first time in his life he "felt important". It was a culture shock and he remembers seeing the Indian wrestlers "walking around holding each other's pinkies".

On the wrestling mat he lost both his matches to Italian Vincenzo Grassi and Soviet champion Nazar Albarian. "These guys were full time professionals," he says. "It was their job and I was just a part-timer but I learnt a lot."

Not all sports escaped the politics and Kinsela remembers Australian 200 metre silver medallist Peter Norman wearing a human rights badge to support fellow medallists and African-Americans Tommie Smith and John Carlos in their famous black power salute. Norman was subsequently banned from running for Australia and died a broken man. "It was a rude awakening for me," says Kinsela. "All Norman did was wear a badge and a simple gesture cost him his career. He was a gentleman, a Salvation Army officer and it's so sad what happened to him."

Following his return from Mexico, Kinsela was called into national service. In 1970, conscripted Gunner John Kinsela flew to Nui Dat in Vietnam and joined 106 Battery, 4th Field Regiment, RAA. On his first day he saw Viet Cong bodies piled up and covered in lime. The smell stays with him to this day.

He saw action early but his nerves were shredded and the constant fear of being overrun by the Viet Cong “sent a shiver down my spine and I slept with one eye open”. He experienced no racism and great camaraderie which made him “equally proud to be Australian and Aboriginal”.

Kinsela returned from Vietnam in 1971 suffering from appendicitis and tonsillitis and after a series of operations had five months to prepare for the Munich Olympic trials. He surprised the wrestling community with his fitness after the layoff and was selected as one of only three wrestlers across 10 weight classes.

Kinsela arrived at the 1972 Games a man of the world in contrast to how he was in Mexico. He won his first bout against the Guatemalan, Pedro Pineda, making headlines back home as the only Australian winner on day one. On day three he faced his old nemesis, Grassi, and his progress would be tested. In an epic nine-minute struggle the Italian prevailed by two points – and complimented Kinsela on his improvement.

Kinsela finished seventh in the 52kg division and was on a high but his mood was shattered when he heard the familiar dry crackle of an AK47 machine gun. The horrifying Munich massacre had begun in the Olympic Village, in which Palestinian terrorist group Black September slaughtered 11 Israeli athletes, including four from the wrestling team.

The Games were suspended for the first time in history and Kinsela was devastated by the unfolding events. The Australian wrestling coach Dick Garrard was friends with his Israeli counterparts and the two teams were close, often sharing a sauna to lose weight. Kinsela decided to retire.

He returned to a nation divided over the Vietnam War, which had now swung in favour of Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnam. Kinsela was heckled in public for wearing his returned services badge and this triggered confusion, resentment and depression in many servicemen, including Kinsela. They were unwelcome at ANZAC Day marches and in response he “never mentioned to anyone that I fought in Vietnam and got on with life”.

He married his childhood sweetheart Yvonne in 1972 and was talked out of retirement to wrestle again, making the Australian team for the World Championships in 1974 in Istanbul. He again qualified for the 1976 Montreal

Olympics but did not make the final team due to internal politics, retiring for a second and final time.

Missing the structure of military life Kinsela joined the 1st Commando Regiment. Kinsela had always wanted to join the SAS and in 1981 he won the Commando of the Year award scoring 100% in his demolitions exam, one of his proudest achievements. “I beat barristers and policemen,” Kinsela says.

After a six-year stint in the commandos he returned to work as a courier and with the Aboriginal community. But the jungles of Vietnam have a long reach and Kinsela started to show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. He felt anxiety and panicked if people were late, became quick tempered and began to binge drink as a coping mechanism. Confused, he lost his bearings and too proud to admit his problem. He “hit the wall”.



In 2001 Kinsela suffered a mental breakdown and was admitted to a veteran-friendly institution for treatment.

Kinsela was treated successfully and today is bursting with a sense of mission, no longer dragging the glacier of the past behind him. He has moved from the valley of the shadow to enchanted ground and at 67 he values every day, although pancreatitis and depression still take their toll. “I don’t want anyone feeling sorry for me,” he says. “It just impacts my ability to get around and help.”

He proudly attends ANZAC ceremonies and is preparing to speak at the upcoming indigenous veterans memorial service. His lifelong passion for social justice has found a home as the chairperson of the successful Mt Druitt Circle Sentencing program in which Aboriginal offenders face up to a circle of elders who act as jurors.

“John puts his heart and soul into everything he did,” says sister Lorraine. “He’s still doing it with the kids programs and the court program. He served his country twice, is a dual Olympian, been a great father and husband and survived personal hell. And here he is, resilient, busy, pushing on and helping others.”

His legacy in keeping kids out of jail is matched by his wrestling legacy. He is on the board of Wrestling NSW, does judging and pairing at local competitions and is friends with all the wrestlers on Facebook. Some of his students have stayed in wrestling and contribute as coaches and referees including Shane Parker who kept the Aboriginal wrestling tradition alive at the Delhi Commonwealth Games. “It’s the best club in NSW,” he says of the achievements of this little wrestling room.

Koenig ends the training session with some encouraging words for his young students. “You guys worked like demons, well done.” The kids scatter back to their parents and its time to leave with everybody saying goodbye to Uncle John.

As we head into the night John Kinsela, the first Aboriginal Olympic wrestler and Commando of the Year, who breached the limitations of race and education, reflects on the underlying foundation of his success. “The reason I did so well is that I was nurtured and now I am passing on someone else’s legacy,” he says. “I’m doing things for other people and there’s nothing more important than giving back.”

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THE LAST POST

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3757780	A Bobos	24/1/17	154256	T Davies	2/1/17	R59377	T Hart	4/1/17
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A410621	G Bottrell	7/9/16	2079701	A Dawkins	15/2/17	154653	C Hawke	3/11/16
SX26859	M Bowman	12/10/16	438100	B Hastwell	08/04/2016	14368917	J Haynes	11/12/16
14786349	K Boyce	1/2/17	T267224	D de Hoedt	20/10/16	4721408	P Haynes	18/10/16
PA5008	P Bradbrook	6/2/17	NX24724	A De Vere Tyndall	3/12/16	106044	A Hayter	22/10/16
SX39113	A Brittain	8/12/16	4691668	J Dixon	1/12/16	44365	D Hodges	16/11/16
14942701	F Brooker	21/12/16	14616	L Doak	23/9/16	152810	T Holden	27/11/16
SFX25933	B Brown	3/9/16	R29604	N Dolman	5/11/16	4721993	B Holland	25/12/16
1500692	K Brown	5/1/17	SX17260	I Dowdell	8/2/17	4/701623	J Holzberger	6/8/16
213181	T Brown	28/9/16	D/JX735205	E Downes	23/2/17	435572	G Horwood	27/12/16
SX30358	K Bruhn	17/1/17	44446	P Dungey	29/10/16	SX39856	S Howe	2/2/17
4709629	G Bryant	3/2/17	S115403	E Eckermann	6/12/16	443942	J Howie	14/10/16
SX31607	R Bryant	11/2/17	500441	G Edgar	20/9/16	A102675	J Hughes	11/11/16
22844941	F Buckler	20/8/16	48192	A Edwards	9/2/17	429964	K Jackson	5/9/16
SX23122	R Buttery	18/2/17	D/JX568275	H Elder	21/2/17	4702364	C Jaeschke	16/1/17
PA4642	D Byrne	4/9/16	1704NS	E Ellison	18/1/17	848930	K James	24/9/16

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SX16063	L James	2/12/16
PA3134	A Jarrett	18/1/17
F410743	S Johnson	16/2/17
4720058	M Jonas	20/8/16
R64309	E Jones	7/2/17
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111599	E Knowles	12/10/16
F45305	T Koler	3/12/16
44623	H Krieg	11/1/17
153178	B Krollig	26/9/16
121515	C Kroschel	15/2/17
SX39015	C Landorf	8/10/16
28797	J Laphorne	24/12/16
4705178	J Laube	5/9/16
PA5089	P Linehan	30/8/16
27736	G Lloyd	7/10/16
47105	A Lock	18/10/16
SX19495	R Love	14/12/16
215758	R Mangan	1/1/17
S24246	A Marshall	22/12/16
6924NS	D Marshall	14/10/16
NS4707	J Martin	18/11/16
CJX420854	G McAuliffe	13/9/16
SX29827	G McCulloch	25/8/16
23091806	R McEwan	8/8/16
2/401143	K McKenzie	15/2/17
Q4018109	E Melvin	18/2/17
903743	E Metcalf	11/11/16
889991	C Midford	16/2/17
34175	J Millington	4/2/17
43147	P Milne	11/12/16
SX27402	W Milton	4/10/16
7600885	D Moffatt	5/1/17
490352	M Moore	26/1/17
48630	R Morris	22/2/17
4/700618	P Morrissy	18/1/17
SX24008	R Mortimer	30/9/16
SX32860	F Munt	5/9/16
SX13678	F Murphy	28/9/16

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116315	M Nankivell	11/9/16
R101274	A Nielsen	6/12/16
SX30654	L Nitschke	19/10/16
7/40003	J Nixon	1/12/16
6109072	L Nixon	1/2/17
SX2135	W O'Brien	7/2/17
352S	E O'Loughlin	28/1/17
PA4093	J Olsson	11/10/16
4/1013	F O'Neil	21/9/16
O315466	W O'Neill	21/12/16
39248	A O'Toole	30/9/16
213511	D Owens	28/11/16
717259	E Packer	15/10/16
2790107	K Paech	12/10/16
R212539	G Palmer	16/11/16
L/FX78347	E Percival	25/8/16
SX27089	R Peters	24/10/16
PA2043	D Phillips	25/11/16
SX26016	A Pollitt	8/11/16
4098400	D Poole	6/12/16
PA5937	E Powell	9/1/17
14700313	J Pringle	13/10/16
122776	L Quast	11/2/17
14187225	K Randall	2/11/16
27857	P Redway	23/2/17
PA2957	R Reynolds	16/12/16
54748	C Richardson	10/11/16
PA2642	M Richardson	1/12/16
SF113494	P Riedel	27/10/16
R85153	E Riley	26/2/17
632106	J Ritchie	17/1/17
A4215	M Roberts	9/9/16
A228795	P Ronayne	1/2/17
4046076	A Rowe	10/12/16
417315	J Ryan	22/12/16
SX11850	E Sambell	28/10/16
433823	T Sampson	24/11/16
SF113457	R Saville	6/9/16
SX15896	B Sawers	3/10/16
SX12604	J Schinckel	10/9/16
122072	P Schmitt	27/9/16
45198	G Seeley	29/11/16
47078	C Shiels	22/1/17
SX15896	B Sawers	3/10/16

NUMBER	NAME	DATE
SX12604	J Schinckel	10/9/16
122072	P Schmitt	27/9/16
45198	G Seeley	29/11/16
47078	C Shiels	22/1/17
SX13437	L Shillingford	1/10/16
S02920	W Siviour	3/9/16
C/JX409283	K Smith	13/8/16
4/710135	P Smith	21/9/16
42093	R Stanley	24/8/16
115523	S Starr	25/10/16
PA3638	R Staveley	4/2/17
47672	A Steer	2/11/16
4719572	P Stoeckel	21/1/17
16835 A538	A Styling	23/1/17
4720894	K Taheny	9/2/17
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PA2330	M Thompson	26/10/16
T179318	D Thorne	9/11/16
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4519076	M Van Lieshout	6/11/16
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S129866	L Wenzel	30/11/16
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SX25127	C Whitrow	3/10/16
QX24209	J Williams	9/11/16
SF113391	P Williams	30/11/16
437212	A Wilson	9/11/16
155078	H Wilson	7/1/17
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SX31394	D Wordley	15/11/16
SX13656	M Wright	12/12/16
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141631	C Yeates	5/9/16

